

for morning business until 2:30 p.m. as under the previous order with the time equally divided?

Mr. REID. Mr. President, 2:35 p.m.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to extending morning business until 2:35 p.m.?

Morning business is extended until 2:35 p.m.

The Senator from Wyoming is recognized for 2 minutes 9 seconds.

Mr. THOMAS. Under the new circumstances, perhaps I could have 5 minutes.

Mr. COCHRAN. I yield to the distinguished Senator 7½ minutes.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator is recognized for 7½ minutes.

HEALTHY FORESTS

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in talking about the problems I guess particularly in the West, although not only in the West. When I was in high school, I lived near the Shoshone Forest in Cody, WY, and I would help the firefighters fight fires. I remember that so very well, particularly one mountain close to home. It was very steep. As the fire went up the rocks, it would loosen the rocks and they rolled down. Since that time, it has become even more of a problem.

I always think about those who say we ought to leave things the way they are, and I think about the wild horses. If we would get too many wild horses, what would happen to them in the old days? They starved to death. We don't let that happen anymore. We have to keep the numbers down. The same is true with the forests.

We are using the forests differently than we did in the past. More people live closer to the forests. People are using the forests differently. We have more insect problems to manage. We are talking about managing the resource.

There will be areas, of course, where we will not have forest protection—on roadless areas and wilderness areas. But much of the forests are areas where there are many people all the time, where there are roads and buildings, and we have to do something different than we have been doing.

Fires burn at naturally high temperatures and cause severe damage to the soil, watersheds, and air quality, as well as, of course, to the trees. Fires destroy habitat, including endangered species.

It is our responsibility to protect the health and safety of the community in neighboring lands. There is a lot we must do to do a better job.

In Wyoming—and we have not had as much fire as some other States—in the Shoshone Forest where I grew up, many of those trees are infected by insects. Yet only 1 percent of the corridor is available for any kind of treatment and care for these trees. In Big Horn National Forest, a fire burned for 3 weeks causing evacuation of dozens of cabins and loss of other facilities.

Black Hills National Forest—interestingly enough, we had some agreements before that were limited to the Black Hills to do forest fighting, clearing, and so on. We ought to extend that to some of the other forests because we have had experience in that area. Grand Teton, of course.

It is clear we need to have a program. Firefighting is extremely costly. It is expensive to suppress and control. It is much less expensive to seek to avoid fires.

The Forest Service this year has already spent \$1 billion in forest fighting. We passed nearly \$700 million to cover the cost of the shortfall; otherwise, it had to come from other projects. We cannot continue to have these kinds of resources consumed by the fire.

It has already been mentioned that the House has a bill and we have a bill and we will be taking up the differences. There are differences in view as to how different parts should be handled.

Between the House and the Senate, there has been a compromise on almost all the issues that are important: administrative appeals and all the suits that take place. We have an agreement to cut those down, so instead of having to do studies for a year before something can be done, it can be done in 30 days. We have wildlife-urban interface, with half a mile around facilities in which more of this control will take place.

We have the old-growth issues where there can be changes if old growth is in that interface close to buildings. There can be exemptions.

I am most disappointed that, having talked about this issues for years, knowing the impact of not doing something, here we are with objections to moving forward when we have an opportunity to create some solutions to the problem that exists and will continue to exist.

I hope we can do something this week. This is our chance to come together and pass a bill that will be usable. I hope we do that.

I yield the floor.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, how much time remains on the morning business allocation for this side of the aisle?

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). The distinguished Senator has 5 minutes 51 seconds remaining.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I yield the remaining time to the distinguished Senator from New Mexico.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Mexico is recognized.

Mr. DOMENICI. I thank the Chair. I thank the Senator from Mississippi Mr. COCHRAN.

First, on the way to the floor, something very interesting happened to this bill. The Parliamentarian read it and said: Chairman DOMENICI—who had been waiting anxiously to do this bill—you don't have jurisdiction the way the bill is written and said the Agriculture Committee did.

For a little while I had a sourpuss look on me until I found out that, indeed, we were fortunate because Senator THAD COCHRAN and his committee, letting us help him, did a magnificent job. In fact, I can say so there will be no doubt on the record that they did a better job than we could have. So I am very pleased the bill came roundabout that way.

As always happens in a bill of this type, you cannot win on the floor with just a bill produced by committee because there are Senators who are not on any of the committees of jurisdiction who have big interests in the bill. Guess what. Those Senators are now supporting this bill. We must have somebody around here who is against this bill. Senator WYDEN is for it. He has had some of the biggest problems with forests and forest fires in his State of any Senator.

We met under Senator COCHRAN's leadership for weeks. And Senator WYDEN is for this bill. Surely, he is not for not bringing up this bill. Whoever is for not bringing it up—I don't understand.

California has so much of everything that we sometimes forget they have huge forests and huge forest fires, and it burns a lot of things down.

They need to fix the law. Guess what. She is not on the Agriculture Committee. Right?

Mr. COCHRAN. Right.

Mr. DOMENICI. So she came in and said: Let me help. She went to meeting after meeting. Of course, they invited me and my staff. I had more than a few things to do, and I probably was there less than the Senators I just mentioned, but I came. I was one who pursued it and pushed it.

On the Democrat side of the Agriculture Committee, the Senator from Arkansas, BLANCHE LINCOLN, was there all the time. She came to these meetings and she is for it. MAX BAUCUS, Democrat from Montana, a State with huge problems, he was there. He is for it.

Everybody knows the Senator from New Mexico is for it. I have been trying to do this for 10 or 12 years. I got one big bill through that nobody thought could happen in the midst of the forest fires. It passed in an amendment on the floor. We got \$250 million times 2—that is \$500 million—for each agency. We named that bill "happy forests." We named it happy forests because we thought if it works, these forests that cannot see sunlight may see sunlight and they might be happy when they look up at the sun.

So I nicknamed the bill the happy forests, with the trees of America once again being unclogged. The clogging makes the trees limp but also makes them burn like wildfire. We got that one through and it did a lot of good, but we are stuck with the problem that this bill tries to solve; namely, we cannot get anything done in a reasonable period of time. That is the issue.

We do not have to talk about the fancy words, jurisdiction, courts, and

all of that. The truth is, for those who do not want things to happen, they have an inordinate amount of time that they can make everybody waste without doing anything. At least in this bill, for instance, if there is an infested forest—and I do not know anyone that does not have one around—they are ugly, they burn like tinder, and at least in this bill that would be handled very expeditiously.

People wonder why that is not the case right now. In a few months, why can't there be a contract to cut those trees down? Well, those kind of things are getting fixed in this bill.

I am grateful to have these few minutes. I am thankful that this bill went to the Agriculture Committee. The staff did most of the work, and I am very grateful the outsiders came in and helped. I do not want to fail to mention, on the Republican side, the distinguished Senator from Arizona, JOHN MCCAIN, who was not on the committee of jurisdiction, also came with his competent staff. They presented their views and some of the bill was adjusted their way.

So I say to the leadership, I hope when some Senators come and say let's delay this bill, let's not take it up, I hope they would ask, what is this about? When are we going to do it? When are we going to stop destroying our forests or at least do some positive things that we all know are right?

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Under the order, how much time remains on this side?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There is no time remaining.

Mr. REID. I yield the remaining time on this side to the Senator from North Dakota, Mr. CONRAD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from North Dakota is recognized.

OSAMA BIN LADEN AND SEPTEMBER 11

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. President, over the weekend, Osama bin Laden was again seen vowing that al-Qaida would launch suicide attacks against Americans and our allies. Frankly, it angered me to see these taped reports that again Osama bin Laden is threatening Americans.

It has now been 771 days since al-Qaida launched terrorist attacks on American targets on September 11, 2001. For me, this report raised the question of why is Osama bin Laden still able to threaten this country? Why have we not been able to find him and bring him to account?

I was reminded, in seeing these tapes, that just several weeks ago Newsweek magazine did a detailed analysis on where Osama bin Laden might be. They narrowed it down to Kunar province on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. They had detailed reports in that article of Osama bin Laden being seen in this area.

It struck me at the time, if we have a pretty good idea of where Osama bin Laden is, why are we not flooding that area with American forces to take him out? Newsweek went on to report that:

... bin Laden appears to be not only alive, but thriving. And with America distracted in Iraq and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf leery of stirring up an Islamist backlash, there is no large-scale military force currently pursuing the chief culprit in the 9/11 attacks, U.S. officials concede.

I find that alarming. Osama bin Laden led the attacks on this country. We know that. There is no doubt about it. If we are being distracted by Iraq, in my view, that is a serious mistake. I must say it is one that I very much feared one year ago when we were considering whether to attack Iraq. I voted against attacking Iraq at that time because I believed our top priority ought to be going after al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden.

There has just recently been a report in the Boston Globe that says: As the hunt for Saddam Hussein grows more urgent, and the guerilla war in Iraq shows no signs of abating, the Bush administration is continuing to shift highly specialized intelligence officers from the hunt for Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to the Iraq crisis.

I believe that is the wrong priority. I believe the priority ought to be al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden, and we ought to be going into this area that has been identified in seeking to find him and holding him to account.

When I reflect on the decision to go into Iraq, I am reminded that many in the public believe that Iraqis were part of the 9/11 operation. In fact, 69 percent of the American people believe Saddam was involved in the September 11 attacks. Half of Americans believe that Iraqis were among the 9/11 hijackers.

We know that is not the case. There were no Iraqis, none, zero, involved in the 19 who hijacked the planes in our country that turned them into flying bombs that attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Of the 19 hijackers, 15 were from Saudi Arabia, two were from the United Arab Emirates, one was from Egypt, and one was from Lebanon. Not a single one was from Iraq. Yet even now many Americans believe it was in fact Iraqis who attacked this country. In fact, more Americans believe most of the hijackers were Iraqis—21 percent—than the 17 percent who correctly stated none of the hijackers was Iraqi.

We are making decisions here, and the American people are supporting decisions, and apparently they do not have the accurate information.

Unfortunately, it is not hard to figure out why. In speech after speech, the President and his top officials have juxtaposed 9/11 with Saddam and Iraq, strongly implying there is a clear and direct link between Saddam and 9/11. To take only one of dozens of examples, as recently as last month Vice President CHENEY again linked 9/11 with Iraq, describing Iraq as the geographic

base of the terrorists who have had us under assault for many years, but most especially on 9/11.

This is the Vice President of the United States suggesting that Iraq was at the center of the attack on America on 9/11.

The President himself was forced to correct the record just a few days later, when he said we have had no evidence Saddam Hussein was involved on September 11; no evidence.

The record is overwhelmingly clear. We know who attacked us on September 11. It was not Iraq. There were no Iraqis. The people who attacked us on September 11 were al-Qaida, led by Osama bin Laden. In 770 days, we have not yet held him to account. That has to be our priority.

The President and his top officials have sought to link Saddam not just with 9/11 specifically but with al-Qaida more generally. They have cited three pieces of evidence to back that claim.

First, the administration stated that one of the 9/11 hijackers, Mohamed Atta, met with an Iraqi agent in Prague in the spring of 2001. For example, last year the Vice President asserted:

We have reporting that places him [Atta] in Prague with a senior Iraqi intelligence officer a few months before the attacks on the World Trade Center.

That is what the Vice President said then. But what do we know now? The fact is, the CIA and FBI have concluded this report was simply not accurate because Mohammed Atta was in this country, in Virginia Beach, VA, at the time the Vice President had asserted he was in Prague. As the Washington Post reported on September 29:

In making the case for war against Iraq, Vice President Cheney has continued to suggest that an Iraqi intelligence agent met with a September 11, 2001, hijacker months before the attacks, even as the story was falling apart under scrutiny by the FBI, the CIA, and the foreign government that first made the allegation.

Second, the administration has argued a senior al-Qaida operative, Al-Zarqawi, was seen in Baghdad. He may very well have been in Baghdad, but that doesn't prove anything about a formal link between Iraq and al-Qaida. We know senior operatives spent months in our own country prior to 9/11. That doesn't make the United States an ally of al-Qaida any more than the presence of an al-Qaida operative in Baghdad makes Saddam Hussein an ally of Al-Qaida.

Third, the administration said al-Qaida maintained a training camp in northern Iraq. Again, this sounds convincing, but as the former director of the Strategic Proliferation and Military Affairs Office at the State Department's intelligence bureau points out, one finds this is not a very honest explanation: "... I mean, you had terrorist activity described that was taking place in Iraq, without the mention that it was taking place in an area under the control of the Kurds rather